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ABSTRACT

To influence teaching in a way that enhances and improves student learning is the school principal's responsibility. Because perceptions are more important than actual behavior, it is essential for principals to know if their perception of their supervisory actions is in agreement with the way their teachers perceive the same supervisory behaviors; the greater this perceptual agreement, the more favorable the attitude toward work and the greater the possibility for instructional improvement. To investigate the relationship between Mississippi public elementary school principals' and teachers' perceptions of supervisory behavior, the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (form 1) was mailed to all elementary school principals and teachers in the state. The responses from 115 principals and 475 teachers were used for analysis. The results indicated that the principals perceived their supervision methods as more collaborative and directive, whereas the teachers perceived the supervision as less collaborative and directive, and more nondirective. Perceptive discrepancies also existed in the areas of: curriculum development; special student services; staff development; providing materials and facilities; and evaluation of instruction, where principals perceived themselves as more collaborative than the teachers perceived them to be. The bibliography contains 9 references. (KM)

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ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PRINCIPALS' SUPERVISORY BEHAVIORS

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A COMPARISON OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' AND ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PRINCIPALS' SUPERVISORY BEHAVIORS

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Introduction and Background

The principal is considered to be the supervisor of instruction for the school. One of a principal's important duties is to influence the teaching behavior so that learning on the part of the student is both enhanced and improved. This position or duty is significant because of the increased emphasis for accountability in public education.

It is essential that principals know if the way they perceive their supervisory behavior is in agreement with the way their teachers perceive it. Hemphill emphasized that it is the principal's perception of his behavior that will determine the behavior of the group members (Hemphill, 1964). The effectiveness of school principals depends in large measure upon how they are perceived by their immediate staff. Principals' leadership effectiveness will be enhanced if they know what teachers prefer in supervision of instruction. Gorton concurred that individual staff perceptions of supervisory behavior could be the basis for accepting or rejecting a principal's leadership. Perceptions of supervisory behavior are more important than actual

behavior (Gorton, 1971). Sergiovanni and Carver called for attention to the study of effective supervisory leadership from the perspective of the members of the organization (Sergiovanni and Carver, 1980). Unruh asserted that the principal should be aware that the teacher's perceptions of him and his roles determine how well they will respond to his supervision (Unruh and Turner, 1970).

Self-perception is important to the effectiveness of the principal. The principal as a supervisor of instruction must clearly understand his role as a supervisor and evaluate his supervisory behavior. Redfern wrote that self-assessment is a subtle process involving the capacity to weigh strengths and weaknesses, measure accomplishments against goals, admit failure, accept successes, and evaluate achievement (Redfern, 1972).

Getzels addressed congruence of perceptions. When perceptions overlap, satisfaction with work accomplishment results. When perceptions do not overlap, dissatisfaction results. The greater the agreement between teacher and principal perceptions, the more favorable the attitude toward work (Getzels, 1958).

The principal's role as the supervisor of instruction may cause conflict, failure, and short-term perspective as a result of incongruence between

personality needs of mature persons and formal organization requirements. Formal organizational structures make employees feel dependent, submissive, and passive. They often allow utilization of only a limited amount of less important abilities (Argyris, 1980).

The present study was designed to determine if principals' perceptions of their supervisory behaviors were congruent with those of their teachers and to investigate the supervisory behaviors perceived by teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between Mississippi public elementary school principals' perceptions of their supervisory behaviors and teachers' perceptions of principals' supervisory behaviors as measured by the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (SBDQ), Form 1.

Need for the Study

The public has become more cognizant of what is happening in our schools. The demand for accountability and the public need for improved schools necessitates an awareness on the part of principals of how to work with

teachers in improving instruction. Neagley and Evans say that the improvement of the instructional program and the curriculum is the principal's most important job (Neagley and Evans, 1980).

Sergiovanni and Starratt asserted that principals need to behave in a variety of ways depending upon particular situations. The situation, task, and/or group should determine the behaviors used. Sometimes, they observed, it is necessary for a principal to behave in a directive manner, while at other times he should behave in a collaborative manner, or in a non-directive manner depending on the supervisory task or group preferences (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1979).

Several studies have been conducted using the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (SBDQ), Form 1. No study has been done using the SBDQ, Form 1, that investigated the relationship between the elementary principals' perceptions of their actual supervisory behaviors and the teachers' perceptions of the principals' supervisory behaviors. The information reported in this study should assist the principals in knowing how and when to involve teachers for the improvement of instruction, and also should assist educators in better preparing principals for their roles as instructional supervisors in today's elementary schools.

Statement of the Problem

The problem was to determine if there were significant differences between Mississippi public elementary principals' perceptions of their supervisory behaviors and teachers' perceptions of the principals' supervisory behaviors as measured by the SBDQ, Form 1.

As a means of structuring the problem, answers were sought to the following questions:

a. The SBDQ, Form 1, total scores;

b. Any of the three dimensional scores;

c. Any of the eight subscale scores; or

d. The dimensional scores within each subscale?

This study investigated the relationship between Mississippi public elementary principals' self-perceptions and teachers' perceptions of their principals' supervisory behaviors. The Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (SBDQ), Form 1, was used to gather data from the Mississippi elementary principals and teachers. Data were gathered for the total SBDQ scores, the dimensional scores, the subscale scores, and the dimensional scores within each subscale.

The population consisted of all elementary principals and teachers in Mississippi public schools. Responses were solicited from 187 principals and 935 teachers. The 187 elementary school principals were randomly selected from all elementary principals in

Mississippi. Five teachers were randomly selected from each of the 187 elementary schools to participate in the study. Seven hundred one responses were received making a total of 63 percent return. Of these responses, 590 were used in the study making a total of 52 percent. These included 115 principals (61 percent) and 475 teachers (50 percent).

One-way analysis of variance was utilized for interpretation of the data.

The findings of this study indicated:

1. The elementary principals perceived their supervisory behaviors as more collaborative and less nondirective whereas the teachers perceived them less directive, less collaborative, and more nondirective.

2. The perceptions of the supervisory behavior of the principal by the principal and the teacher were congruent in the directive dimension. No significant differences were observed between elementary teachers' and principals relative to the dimension of directive behaviors.

3. Results indicated significant differences in the supervisory behaviors of the principals when the subscales were considered. Significant differences were found in the following subscales: Curriculum Development, Instructional Organization, Staffing, and

Providing Materials and Facilities. Teachers perceived principals to deal less with supervisory behavior tasks on these subscales than did principals perceived themselves.

4. Results indicated significant differences in the supervisory behaviors of principals by principals and by teachers relative to the subscales of: Curriculum Development, Special Student Services, Staff Development, Providing Materials and Facilities and Evaluation of Instruction.

Principals perceived themselves as more collaborative in these areas than did teachers perceived them to be.

Principals perceived themselves as more nondirective than did teachers perceived principals to be on the subscale of Curriculum Development.

Teachers perceived principals to be more nondirective on the subscales of: Staffing, Providing Materials and Facilities, Developing Community Relations, and Evaluation of Instruction than did principals perceived themselves to be.

Principals perceived themselves as being more directive on the subscale of Staffing than did the teachers perceived principals to be.

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